

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 002456

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOIST STUDENT UNION SUSPENDS STRIKE

REF: KATHMANDU 2346

**¶1.** (U) On December 22 the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal National Independent Students Union - Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) ended its strike against private schools in the Kathmandu Valley after the schools' directors agreed to cut tuition up to 25 percent. The strike, which began on December 9, had forced the closure of 2,000 private and boarding schools across the Valley for two weeks, affecting 500,000 students. Lincoln International School, which is attended by most Mission dependent children, continued to hold classes at alternate locations, including private homes, from December 9-19, when the winter break began. Other private schools in Kathmandu not already on winter break opened December 23 for the first time in two weeks.

**¶2.** (SBU) The ANNISU-R announcement cautioned that the student union will reinstitute the strike the second week of February if the rest of its demands are not met. Rajesh Khadka, President of the Private and Boarding School Organization of Nepal (PABSON), told the Embassy that his organization had done its part to avert continuation of the strike by lowering tuition, suspending the assessment of miscellaneous additional fees, and pledging to hire more Nepali teachers. The rest of the demands made by ANNISU-R, including that the Government of Nepal (GON) lift its official designation of the student wing as a terrorist organization, is up to the GON, he observed. Therefore no one should blame PABSON if the strike resumes in February, he declared. Other demands include that the GON disclose the whereabouts of student leaders in detention, and provide free education up to secondary school.

**¶3.** (SBU) Nepal's public education system is so bad that even very poor Nepalis try to enroll their children in private school. The GON has not yet officially responded to the ANNISU-R's suspension of its strike, but recent comments from GON leaders make it appear unlikely that they will agree to lift the terrorist designation given the student group. The student union probably came under considerable pressure from members of "civil society"--including, quite possibly, some with links to the Maoists--for holding the educational system hostage to their demands. The reduction in school fees allows the ANNISU-R to claim a moral victory that may resonate with the many low-income Nepalis struggling to keep their children in private school. To counter this, the GON will have to make good-faith efforts--and make them fast--to improve the public school system.

MALINOWSKI